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A True DECLARATION OF OUR INNOCENCY who in ſcorn are called QUAKERS,

AND

How we are clear (if we have juſtice) from the Penalties of the late Act made againſt Seditious Meetings, and Conventicles, as expreſt in the Preamble and Reaſon of the ſaid Act, &c.

Alſo ſeveral Reaſons, and Proofs by the *Common-Prayer-Book*, and the holy Scriptures directed to in it, *That our Meetings, and the manner of them, are according to the Scriptures of Truth, and therefore allowed by the Liturgy of the Church of* England, *&c.*

By *J. S.*

Printed in the Year, 1670.

DECLARATION

OF OUR

INNOCENCY

who in Scorn are called

QUAKERS,

AND

How we are clear (if we have Justice)
from the Penalties of the late Act made against
Seditious Meetings, and Conventicles, as express'd in
the Preamble and Reason of the said Act, &c.

Also several Reasons, and Proofs by
directed to in it, The our Meetings, and the manner of
them, are according to the Scriptures of Truth, and practice
allowed by the Liturgy of the Church of England, &c.

By 4 S.

Printed in the Year, 1670.

A True Declaration of our Innocency, who in scorn are called *Quakers*; and how we are clear (if we have justice) from the penalties of the late Act made against Seditious Meetings, and Conventicles, as expresst in the Preamble and Reason of the said Act, &c.

THe first and great Reason, upon which the late Act against Conventicles seemes to be grounded, and the things punishable by the severity of it, are, "The "dangerous Practises of seditious Sectaries, and other "disloyal Persons, who under pretence of tender Con-"sciences, have, or may at their Meetings, contrive Insurrecti-"ons, &c.

And to this we say, (who are distinguished from other men by the name of *Quakers*) that our Meetings have never been seditious, nor our Practises therein dangerous; for all such Persons, Practises, and Meetings by us are utterly denied, even them who make a profession of Religion, and God's Worship, a Cloak to plot and contrive under, (and indeed if such Meetings were known to be held in *England* there were great cause to make a severe Act against them) but from Plotting and Contriving the breach of the peace and publique safety of the Kingdom and Government, under which we live, the God of Heaven and Earth knows, that both in our Meetings, and every other Practise, we are altogether clear and innocent; therefore whosoever persecutes us for our Meetings and religious Duties (that we are bound in Conscience to perform to Almighty God) when as yet to him or them it cannot be made appear, by words, actions, or other demonstrative signes, that though Religion is pretended, yet the contrary is intended, doth us abso-

lute wrong, for which he and they must give account in the Day of God's rightful Judgments; for the pure Law of God, and the just Laws of men condemn no man farther then they hear him, and knows what he doth to be absolutly evil.

Therefore if we meet together to worship the Lord, and to give thanks to Almighty God for his Benefits and Mercies we have already received, & do daily receive, we are not herein punishable by the late Act of the King and Parliament of *England*, which appears not at all to intend the prohibition of these things, where they are done in true sincerity of heart unto the Lord, as holy & religious Practises, that pertain to his Worship in Spirit and Truth, and relate to mens peace of Conscience in this present time, and to their eternal estate and condition of Happiness with him and his Son Christ Jesus in the World to come, which Duties we can by no means omit, or leave undone, without danger of the everlasting ruin and destruction of our Souls; and in the practise of these things we should not own and confess our Lord and Master Christ Jesus before men, for fear of Persecution, how justly might he deny us before his Father, which is in Heaven? then what would it profit us, if we should both be freed from having our Goods spoyled, our Persons, as the Ground and Street, trampled over by the worst of men, and should gain the fading pleasures of the World, and in the end lose our souls, and be Cast-awayes.

The second Reason of the late Act, and the things punishable by it, are, "Conventicles, under colour or pre-"tence of any Exercise of Religion, in other manner then "according to the Liturgy and Practise of the Church of "*England*, &c.

In answer to this, we say on this wise, If the Church of *England* practise according to its Liturgy, then will not the Members thereof persecute us, or our Meetings by this new Law; because, not only the manner of our Meetings, but what is practised by us at them, is allowed by the Liturgy, as may fully appear.

First concerning the manner of our meetings, We meet on the same manner now, as our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus,

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the great Founder of Christianity, and his Disciples, the first Christians met together in the primitive times, in that it is, and hath been our constant practise ever since the Lord gathered us out of the broad-way of destruction, into the way of Life, to worship him in Spirit and Truth.

As to the manner of our Meetings, We have sometimes met upon Mountains, and sometimes by the Sea side, and other times by the Rivers side, and often in private houses, in which manner it appears fully by the Scriptures, which the Liturgy directs us to, that our Lord Christ, and the Apostles, with the first Christian Believers met together, as you may read in the Gospel appointed in the Liturgy, to be read upon *All-Saint* day, St *Matth.* 5. 1. *Jesus seeing the Multitude went up into a Mountain; and when he was set, his Disciples came unto him, and he taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, &c.*

And *Acts* 1. a part of which is appointed in the Liturgy to be read on *Ascention* day; Vers. 13. *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper Room, where abode both* Peter *and* James, *&c.*

And Vers. 14, 15. *These all continued with one accord in Prayer and Supplications, with the women, and* Mary *the Mother of Jesus, with his Brethren: And in those dayes* Peter *stood up in the midst of the Disciples, and said, (the number of the names together were about a hundred and twenty) Men and Brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, &c.*

The Epistle appointed in the Liturgy, to be read upon *Whitsunday, Acts* 2. 2. *And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Winde, and filled the House where they were sitting, &c.*

And the Gospel appointed in the Liturgy to be read the second Sunday after *Easter, John* 20. *The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you, &c.*

Its said in Sacred Scripture, *That out of the mouth of two or three Witnesses, every truth shall be established*, therefore have we brought these Testimonies out of the Liturgy of the Church of *England*, to prove that the manner of our Meetings are not contrary, but accor-

accordingly, and approved of by the Scriptures mentioned in the Liturgy; for the Example of which, we have the Son of the ever-living God, and his Apostles, the first that ever bore the name of Christianity upon the Earth, as may be further proved by those holy Scriptures following.

Matth. 13. *The same day Jesus went out of the House, and sat by the Sea-side, and a great Multitude were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a Ship, and sat, and the whole Multitude stood on the Shore, and he spake many things unto them in Parables, and said*— as you may read more at large in the Chapter.

And *Acts* 16. 13. *And on the Sabbath-day we went out of the City, by a River side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake to the women which resorted thither, &c.* at which Sermon of *Paul* by the River side, God opened the heart of *Lydia*.

And *Acts* 20. 7, 8. *Upon the First day of the week, when the Disciples were come together to break Bread*, Paul *preached to them, ready to depart on the Morrow, and continued his Speech until midnight; and there were many lights in the upper Chamber, where they were gathered together.*

And *Acts* 28. 30, 31. *And* Paul *dwelt two whole years in his own hired House, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things that Concern our Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no man forbidding him*; yet is not this manner of his preaching and teaching in a private House disallowed by the Liturgy.

Therefore seeing it is thus, it is good for all to be wary how they swear, or judge, that our Meetings are seditious Conventicles, and the manner and form in which we meet disallowed by the Liturgy; for larger Examples we have for our Practises in the Scriptures repeated in the Liturgy, then they have for theirs, who have made a great profession of the Liturgy, and now persecutes the Practisers of those Scriptures spoken of in the Liturgy.

Thridly. For our Assembling of our selves together to wait upon the Lord in his Counsel, for the help of his Spirit to teach and instruct us in worshipping and giving thanks unto him, the Almighty God; which cannot be really and acceptably done, but in Spirit and in Truth, which is in no wise contrary

contrary, but according to the holy Scriptures mentioned in the Liturgy, neither doth the Liturgy bind to any particular place or time in the performance of these Christian duties, where it instructs the Priest to say, *It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord, holy Father, Almighty Everlasting God, &c.* therefore every understanding Christian must needs see how this approves of the times and places in which the Saints of old worshipped, and gave thanks unto the true and living God, who met together to perform these duties in their Age and Generation, as we do in ours, somtimes upon Mountains, and other times by the Sea and River sides, and often in private houses, as we do now; and is it not strange you should now persecute us for practising that which you your selves profess: Therefore can no man judge us in the manner of our Meetings, and about the performance of our heavenly Services therin without reflecting upon our Saviour Christ, and his Apostles, (whose blessed Example we follow) and contradicting the Liturgy of the Church of *England* also, in doing to us in these things as they would not be done by themselves, in indeavouring to afflict us for doing those things which the Liturgy doth not only approve, but saith, *It is our bounden duty, at all times, and in all places, to give thanks unto God*; yet ought we most chiefly so to do when we assemble and meet together.

St. *Matth.*7. 12. *to be read in the Offertory.*

J. S.

THE END.